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THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Professor Vedder's book on the New Testament canon¹ represents an attempt to sketch the whole matter of the origin and rise of the New Testament as a body of scripture. The first question here would seem to be, How came there to be a New Testament canon of scripture at all? In answering it, Professor Vedder throws much emphasis upon the apostles and their testimony; the Christian prophets and the gifts of the spirit, in which the early Christians so fully believed, seem to him to have little value for the problem. And yet others have found in them the key to the whole movement. Like Westcott and Gregory, Dr. Vedder finds the collection of New Testament scriptures forming everywhere spontaneously and simultaneously in the second century, in Africa, Alexandria, Syria—the East and the West. That a New Testament canon in any sense first emanated from Rome, he stoutly denies. Here is indeed a great problem, and it is cause for regret that Dr. Vedder has not handled it more judicially. He denies the Roman origin of the Muratorian canon, claims Clement of Alexandria as a voucher for his "provisional" canon, and quietly assumes the second-century origin of the Peshitto. This last, in a writer so rigorous in demanding the most positive proof from his opponents, is unfortunate, to say the least, since Burkitt has pretty conclusively shown that the Peshitto belongs early in the fifth century, not the second. The first and second points are hardly stronger; the Muratorian is almost certainly of Roman origin, and Clement of Alexandria on Dr. Vedder's own showing was really no canonist at all, in the exclusive sense. In short, Dr. Vedder's reconstruction collapses. The followers of Bishop Westcott must look further and deeper, if they are to overthrow the historical findings of Professor Harnack. We cannot agree with Dr. Vedder in his argument against the ordinary use of Greek in the second century in the Roman church; here he has not done the evidence justice; and indeed not a few of his minor contentions are open to serious objection. It is not easy to resist the feeling that in some of these the author is somewhat lacking in candor, and his undue severity in condemning men such as Harnack, with whom he disagrees, and for whose reasoning, we are told, puerile is too good a word (p. 163), must react upon himself. Some good and suggestive things are said in this book, it is true, but it fails to perform the task it undertakes. In his search for the beginnings, Dr. Vedder has not gone far enough or deep enough; in his weighing of evidence he betrays unmistakable bias, and in detailed statements he is often inaccurate. His contempt for the lost litera-

¹ *Our New Testament. How Did We Get It?* By Henry C. Vedder. Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1908. x+388 pages. \$1.00.

ture of the second century sits ill on a historian (p. 59). To connect the *Didache* with the year 100 and *Diognetus* with 130 is astonishing. With regard to Marcion's relation to the canon Dr. Vedder misapprehends the bearing of the facts. Marcion's attempt was not to substitute his New Testament for the one current among the churches, but to substitute a New Testament for the Old. Schlecht's discovery of the original form of the *Didache* seems to have escaped Dr. Vedder (p. 225), or he would know that in its earlier form it lacks just those echoes of the Sermon on the Mount to which he appeals. The allusions to a letter of Ignatius to the Philippians (p. 65) and to Gregory of "Nazianzen" (p. 374) are inaccuracies. On the whole, the study of the rise of the canon requires deeper insight, keener discrimination, and a more candid and generous temper.

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THE APOLOGETIC OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

How far back in the history of the church ought one to date the beginning of the Age of the Apologists? In the judgment of Mr. Scott¹ the fashioning of an apologetic commenced immediately after the death of Jesus, and the earliest extant apologetic literature is found in the books of the New Testament. Indeed, it was primarily as such that these books were produced. And this is true even of the Synoptic Gospels; they are not mainly biographical, but represent the effort to establish conviction as to the messiahship of Jesus through the choice of incidents in his career that favor such a conclusion about him. This conception of the central aim of the New Testament books is not entirely new; but never before has it been wrought out with the fulness and supported with the clearness that characterize these lectures given at Glasgow University under the Alexander Robertson Trust.

The literature of the New Testament makes manifest its apologetic aim under several forms, namely: (1) where it is seen to be directed against Judaism; (2) in its support of Christianity in opposition to the prevalent heathenism; (3) by its attacks upon the encroachments of Gnosticism, and (4) in its endeavor to exhibit Christianity as the absolute religion. By the recognition of the apologetic character of much that is found in the New Testament, one will be brought to a juster judgment as to the right interpretation and the wise use of this material today. It will be regarded less as a final statement of Christian truth, more as an exhibit of the

¹ *The Apologetic of the New Testament*. (Crown Theological Library.) By E. F. Scott. New York: Putnam, 1907. vii + 258 pages.